



Foster Care In Indiana

Every child deserves a loving, stable and safe home. Unfortunately, sometimes children can't find that safe environment in their own home.

When families are in crisis, Indiana's foster care program provides 24-hour care to children who can no longer safely remain in their homes due to the risk of abuse or neglect, or behaviors which may result in danger to themselves or others.

When a child is removed from the care of their parents or guardian they are placed in an approved relative home, a licensed foster family home, a group home or child care facility, or other court-approved facility. Children with special health care needs are placed in therapeutic foster homes. The goal is to place children in the least restrictive, most family-like setting that meets the needs of the child.

About 1,100 of Indiana's children began 2004 in relative home placements and approximately 5,300 children were in foster care.

A Boone County couple, Carroll and Mary Willey, have served as foster parents to more than 300 children during the last 32 years. "We feel like we've touched all of their lives in some way," Carroll said.

***Indianapolis Star-West
March 26, 2004***

Becoming a foster parent

Prior to becoming a foster parent in Indiana, parents must be screened, trained and licensed.

- Screening: Basic screening requirements include an orientation, home inspection, criminal background check and a physical and/or psychological evaluation.
- Training: Comprehensive training is based upon the type of foster parenting license being sought.
- Licensing: There are three types of foster parenting licenses available in Indiana: standard, special needs and therapeutic.

John Cole, a former foster child, is now an FSSA caseworker who helps children find foster parents. "This gives me an opportunity to help other families and children," Cole said. "Every child needs someone they can turn to and depend on. If things hadn't turned out the way they did for me, I probably would have chosen a different path."

New Indiana Initiatives

- As part of Lieutenant Governor Kathy Davis' Peak Performance Project to maximize the efficiency of state government and strengthen service delivery to Hoosiers, the FSSA Office's of Family and Children in seven Indiana counties will implement routine mental health screening, assessment and treatment for children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect. The initiative is expected to begin this summer in Allen, Bartholomew, Clay, Fountain, Lake, Marion and Owen counties.
- FSSA and the Indiana Foster Care and Adoption Association are teaming up to recruit more foster parents and focus positive attention on the importance of foster care. Indiana has approximately 4,000 licensed foster homes, however this number fluctuates daily.

Benefits of becoming a foster parent

Foster parents are a valuable resource for families and children in crisis. Their work is extremely challenging and rewarding. Foster parents work to help reunite a child with a biological parent, or care for a child until that child is adopted.

- Foster parents nurture children in need — providing guidance, comfort and hope in times of crisis.
- Foster parents help to provide continuity and stability during unstable situations. This helps children achieve in school and reduces truancy.
- Foster parents show children there are adults who care about them, and who they can trust.

To learn more about becoming a foster parent call 1-800-468-4228

Opportunities for foster youth

Tools and resources are available to help foster youth be successful.

- **Indiana's Independent Living Initiative**

The initiative, which was established by the federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, Title I of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, provides programs and services that include housing assistance, education, vocational and employment training, healthcare, basic skills training and support services for youth who are or have been in foster care in Indiana. For more information visit: www.bsu.edu/ssrc/il/

- **Computer Training Workshops**

In 2003 and 2004 the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), through a contract with the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at Ball State University, has sponsored computer workshops for teenaged youth in foster care to strengthen their skill sets and help them to thrive independently in the future. At the conclusion of the workshops, participants receive a desktop computer, printer and other various computer supplies.

- **The 21st Century Scholars Program**

Youth in foster care are eligible for this Indiana program that provides secondary educational assistance. Eligible 7th- and 8th-grade youth who enroll in the program and fulfill a pledge of good citizenship to the state are guaranteed the cost of four years of college tuition at any participating public college or university in Indiana. For more information visit: www.scholars.indiana.edu/

- **Chafee Voucher/Scholarship Program**

College and vocational scholarships will be dispersed by FSSA to foster youth statewide through federal educational and training vouchers. As of June 1, 2004, FSSA identified over 40 children who are eligible for the scholarships and FSSA is working to identify more.

Getting involved

While thousands of dedicated Hoosier foster parents provide a safe, loving home where children can thrive, there is always a need for additional and more diverse sets of foster parents willing to care for children and serve as mentors to abused and neglected kids.

What You Can Do

Become a foster parent

*Call 1-800-468-4228 or visit www.ifcaa.org
or contact your FSSA County office of Family and Children
listed in your local telephone directory or online at www.IN.gov/fssa*

Become a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer

Contact the State Office of GAL/CASA, call 1-800-542-0813

Be a mentor to a child or sponsor a child wanting to attend college or vocational school

Provide internship, employment and training opportunities for youth

Support foster families and recognize community advocates and child welfare workers who dedicate their work to children in Indiana's child welfare system

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